

CHAPTER III.

STRATEGIC RECONNOISSANCES.

ON January 26, 1862, Fleet-Captain Charles H. Davis and Commander C. R. P. Rodgers, with the *Ottawa*, *Seneca*, *Smith*, *Potomska*, *Ellen*, and *Western World*, and the armed launches of the *Wabash*, accompanied by the army transports *Cosmopolitan*, *Delaware*, and *Boston*, having on board the Sixth Connecticut, Fourth New Hampshire, and Ninety-seventh Pennsylvania regiments, a total of 2,400 men, commanded by Brigadier-General H. G. Wright, entered Warsaw Sound. The following morning General Wright and Major Speidel went on board of the *Ottawa*, upon which vessel Captain Davis was. Two companies of the Sixth Connecticut having been sent on board of the *Ottawa* and *Seneca*, the vessels got under way, and proceeded into Tybee River. Owing to shoal water on the bar it was 8.30 A.M. before the vessels got in, and 1.30 P.M. before they reached the point nearest to Pulaski on its land side. It was amusing to note the bustle. No shots were fired at the vessels, because no rifled or heavy guns were mounted on the side which was supposed unapproachable by vessels of war. Great preparations were made in shifting guns for use when the vessels returned, but as it was simply a matter of choice with the vessels as to when they would return, they preferred doing so under the cover of the night.

The gunboats passed on, and reaching the part of the river

nearest to the highest land on Wilmington Island, their farther progress was at least temporarily prevented by a double row of heavy piles driven across the channel. They anchored and despatched boats from the different vessels to examine numerous creeks and the upper part of the river. At 5 P.M. five Confederate steamers, one bearing the flag of Commodore Tatnall, came to anchor at the upper end of St. Augustine's Creek. The telegraph wire was seen on the marsh between Savannah and Fort Pulaski, and was cut. General Wright and others made careful examination as to the advantage of a military occupation of Wilmington Island, to which General Sherman had directed his attention.

At 11.15 A.M. of the following day (28th), five Confederate vessels attempted to pass down the Savannah River to Fort Pulaski, with scows in tow. A force of gunboats under Commander John Rodgers, then in Wright River, on the opposite side of the Savannah, and the force under Captain Davis opened fire on the enemy, which was returned with spirit. The flag-ship and another steamer of the enemy were sufficiently affected by the fire to put about; the other steamers reached Pulaski. The object, without doubt, was to carry necessary stores to the fort should the vessels intercept further communication.

The distance apart of the two forces between which the Confederate steamers passed measures, on a good chart, three statute miles. On their return from Pulaski they chose low tide, and were thus protected from a ricochet fire, as the gunboats lying in the narrow creeks found the marshy banks quite near and high above them. On the morning of the 29th, at 4 A.M., the Union vessels passed down and out, having accomplished fully the intended object, which was to frighten the enemy as to an impending attack on the city of Savannah by a sufficient force, this being merely a reconnoissance,

and perhaps a blind. Captain Davis reported : " As a demonstration, the appearance of the naval and military force in Wilmington and Warsaw Sounds has had complete success. Savannah was thrown into a state of great alarm, and all the energies of the place have been exerted to the utmost to increase its military defences, for which purpose troops have been withdrawn from other places."

On February 18th, Captain John Rodgers had carried out the objects for which he had been sent into Mud and Wright Rivers, and after mooring the small steamer Hale to protect an army battery planted at Venus Point, on the Savannah River, he returned to Port Royal with the force under his command. In relation to this the flag-officer informed the Department that Captain John Rodgers had a force of four gunboats and two purchased steamers, and had rendered the most efficient support and protection to the military parties in the planting of this battery.¹

For some time the flag-officer had been making arrangements for an attack on Fernandina, by collecting or getting ready the vessels doing duty on blockade that would best serve the purpose. At length, on the last day of February, he left Port Royal in the Wabash. On the 2d of March the Wabash and other large vessels anchored off St. Andrew's Inlet, twenty miles north of the sea entrance to Fernandina. The flag was temporarily hoisted on board of the Mohican, Captain S. W. Godon, and the force intended for that inlet formed by signal and entered in the following order : Ottawa,

¹ These two demonstrations were known at the time, in the fleet, to be intended to weaken the defences at Fernandina, particularly by withdrawing the guns for the defence of Savannah. Whether they only drew the attention of General Lee to the impossibility of defending Fernandina with the rear approach unguarded, is of little import. The guns at St. Simon's and at Jekyl Island had been previously sent to Savannah, and those at Fernandina were in process of removal when the expedition reached that point. The troops on board the transports remained in Warsaw Sound until they left for Fernandina.

Mohican, Ellen, Seminole, Pawnee, Pocahontas, Flag, Pembina, Isaac Smith, Penguin, Potomska, armed cutter Henrietta, and armed transport McClellan, the latter having on board the battalion of marines under the command of Major Reynolds.

The army transports followed, the Empire City, Marion, Star of the South, Belvidere, Boston, and George's Creek, carrying a brigade under the command of Brigadier-General H. G. Wright. A black man who had been picked up in a small boat informed the flag-officer that the Confederates had hastily abandoned all of the defences of Fernandina, and were at that moment retreating from Amelia Island, carrying with them such munitions as their precipitate flight would allow.

The enemy had seen this formidable force enter St. Andrew's and, aware that it would proceed by way of Cumberland Sound, knew he had not a moment to lose. He had spent four weary days and nights in the effort to get his heavy rifles out of the strong and isolated sand batteries that guarded the sea approach to Fernandina, endeavoring to save as much of his heavy ordnance as possible. He had been aware, too, for some time, that in failing to guard the approach to St. Andrew's he might as well have left St. Simon's and Jekyll Islands unfortified, and had even then begun the removal of the heavy guns from them, but the attacking force had no further knowledge than the black man gave as to the situation. To the enemy it seemed, doubtless, a mean proceeding to enter by a back door when so much careful preparation had been made to receive a force at the sea entrance of the port, but at the last moment he had abandoned everything, and practically it made no difference to him where the vessels entered.

The flag-officer at once detached a force of light-draught

vessels, under Commander Drayton in the Pawnee, from those that entered the Sound in line the previous day "to push through the Sound with the utmost speed to save public and private property from destruction." This force despatched, at daylight the flag-officer crossed the bar in the Mohican and proceeded to the sea entrance of Fernandina, but rough weather prevented the vessel from entering the harbor until the 4th. In the meantime Commander C. R. P. Rodgers with three armed launches of the Wabash had gone on board of the Pawnee, which vessel was diligently threading her way through the narrow and tortuous channels in the marshes of Cumberland Sound, followed by the Ottawa, Seneca, Huron, Pembina, Isaac Smith, Penguin, Potomska, Ellen, and armed cutter Henrietta. The Pawnee, Ottawa, and Huron were the only vessels that succeeded in crossing "the flats" at the dividing point of the tides. The vessels left behind had no pilots, but at high water they got over and groped their way as they best could, as also the transports Boston and McClellan, the first with the Ninety-seventh Pennsylvania regiment, Colonel Guss, the second with the marine battalion, Major Reynolds.

Commander Drayton proceeded with the vessels that had succeeded in crossing "the flats," until 3 P.M., and when only three miles from Fort Clinch, the Pawnee and Huron grounded with a falling tide. He therefore went on board the Ottawa, to which vessel Commander C. R. P. Rodgers also proceeded with his three armed launches.

On arriving near Fort Clinch it was found deserted, and an officer with an armed boat's crew was despatched to hoist the American flag over it, in order to apprise the flag-officer off the harbor of the condition of affairs. The Ottawa continued on. At Old Fernandina a white flag was hoisted. Passing on, at New Fernandina rifle-shots were fired at the

vessel from the bushes. A railroad train with two locomotives was on the point of starting. The track passed for some distance along the water, offering an opportunity for shell practice, but it was without further result than the killing of two soldiers on the train.

A small steamer, known afterward as the *Darlington*, was seen endeavoring to escape up the river through a drawbridge; the armed launches captured her. Besides women and children on board, the steamer was loaded with mules and army wagons; a Confederate surgeon was also found on board.

It was now 8 P.M.; an armed launch was left to guard the drawbridge, and Captain Drayton returned to the *Pawnee*, which had been left aground. Commander Rodgers with two armed launches went on board of the *Ottawa*, and left for the town of St. Mary's, ten miles up the river, for the purpose of securing the guns that had been hastily removed from Fort Clinch, and were supposed to be at that place.

At daylight of the 4th the *Pawnee* and *Huron* were anchored off the town of Fernandina. Confederate soldiers in the early morning fired on the crew of the launch guarding the drawbridge, and set fire to the end of the trestle-work leading to the bridge. The *Huron* was sent up; the Confederate soldiers vanished, and the fire was put out. Captain Drayton reported: "The batteries on and near Fort Clinch on the southern part of Cumberland Island and at New Fernandina, although many guns had been removed, might have offered very serious obstacles to our approach."

As stated before, the enemy had been busy for several days in removing heavy guns, for the purpose of transporting them beyond the reach of gunboats. At 8 P.M. of the 2d a telegram to Fernandina from Brunswick stated that twenty-four armed vessels were in Cumberland Sound. This pro-

duced a panic, and by noon of the 3d the garrison, which consisted of 1,500 men, and most of the inhabitants had left.

The long line of vessels entering St. Andrew's was really a beautiful and impressive sight; to the naval eye, however, there was not much that was really formidable in it. A punster might be pardoned in calling it an imposing force.

Fernandina was garrisoned on the morning of the 4th by the marines of the Pawnee and a company from the Wabash. At 9 A.M. the Isaac Smith arrived, and later in the day the other gunboats that had passed through the Sound. In the afternoon the Mohican came in by the sea entrance with the flag-officer on board.

We will now note the earlier movements of the enemy. General Trapier reports that on February 23d he received General R. E. Lee's order to withdraw from the islands, securing the artillery, etc. This order was sent by special messenger to the officer commanding the post at Amelia and Talbot Islands, and to Colonel McBlair, commanding the batteries, "to dismantle the batteries with all possible expedition and caution, and then to withdraw the troops and abandon the post."

"The fourth day after the receipt of this order the enemy made his appearance simultaneously in Cumberland Sound, having entered by St. Andrew's, and off the town of Fernandina. At that time the greater number of the guns had been dismounted and removed, and all of the guns that protected the direct entrance to Fernandina. A defence was therefore deemed impracticable, and the order was given to retire from the island. Thirty-three pieces of heavy ordnance were upon these islands, of which eighteen were carried off, as also all of the ammunition. When it is remembered that this was accomplished in four days, no other conclusion can

be formed than that the utmost energy, industry, and vigor were exhibited by both officers and men."

"Five of the guns were subsequently lost, having been put on St. John's Bluff, for the defence of St. John's River. The enemy's prompt movements in that direction rendered it impossible to remove them, as was directed by an order of March 1st."

The Ottawa, previously mentioned as leaving for the town of St. Mary's at midnight, soon reached that place and landed a force without delay. A cavalry force of the enemy left without their horses and equipments. The greater number of the inhabitants had already deserted the town. The Ottawa and an armed launch remained, and Commander Rogers returned to Fernandina in the other launch.

In the defences surrounding Fernandina only thirteen guns were found, one 120-pounder and one 80-pounder, both rifled.

The flag-officer reported that "it is impossible to look at the earthworks on the sea face and the other defences without being surprised that they should have been abandoned. The batteries on the north and northeast shores are as complete as art could make them. Six are well concealed and protected by ranges of sand hills in front, perfect shelter provided for the men, thoroughly covered by the natural growth and by land contours, that striking them from a vessel would be the merest chance. A battery of six guns is equally well sheltered and masked. These batteries and the heavy guns on Fort Clinch commanded the sea entrance completely; another battery of four guns on the south end of Cumberland Island commands the channel after crossing the bar. Within the harbor was found another well-constructed battery." Our "forces had captured Port Royal, but the enemy had given us Fernandina."

Brigadier-General H. G. Wright came into the harbor on the 5th with his brigade, and the forts and public property were at once turned over to him. The flag-officer reports: "I desire to speak here of the harmonious councils and cordial co-operation which have marked throughout my intercourse with this able officer. Our plans of action have been matured by mutual consultation and have been carried into execution by mutual help."

Of the many National defences that had fallen into the hands of the Confederates upon the secession of the Southern States, the National flag was first hoisted over Fort Clinch; it was soon flying over all the others, save Jackson at Savannah, Moultrie and Sumter at Charleston, Caswell below Wilmington, and Gaines and Morgan at Mobile.

The Ottawa, Lieutenant-commanding Stevens, made a reconnoissance up the St. Mary's, as far as navigable for vessels of ten feet draught, fifty miles to Woodstock, and placed notices at various points that all peaceable citizens would be protected in their persons and property. While returning, at a narrow stretch known as the Brick-yards, he was fired on with field artillery and small arms. Of this intended attack he had been given warning, and replied with grape, canister, and small arms, with supposed effect.

Nothing more was seen of the enemy until just above the plantation of a Mrs. Campbell, when a large body of cavalry appeared near the river bank, some twelve hundred yards distant. A few XI-inch shells thrown among them caused great haste and confusion. Three miles below, where the river leaves the high land and enters the marshes, the enemy was discovered in ambush, but before he had an opportunity of firing, the Ottawa opened with XI-canister and from three howitzers, it was supposed with great effect. Captain Stevens acknowledged the good conduct of those under his

command, and the efficient services of Midshipman Pearson of the Wabash. One master's mate was seriously wounded, and three of the crew less so.

The army was now in occupancy of Fernandina, and vessels despatched in the performance of duties as above shown, when the Wabash, now the flag-ship, left her anchorage off Fernandina, accompanied by a bevy of gunboats, and anchored off St. Augustine on the evening of March 8th. The fact was ascertained that no armed resistance was practicable or intended at that point, and the gunboats were ordered to the mouth of St. John's River, some forty miles north, to buoy out the entrance and to cross when the tides and state of the sea permitted. The Wabash remained off St. Augustine, and sent a boat on shore as soon as the state of the sea permitted. Commander C. R. P. Rodgers went in with a flag of truce. As the boat approached a white flag was hoisted on Fort Marion. The boat landed at the wharf, and Commander Rodgers was there received by the Mayor, who conducted him to the town-hall, where the municipal authorities were assembled. He stated that a vessel of war had arrived off the bar for the purpose of restoring the authority of the United States; it was deemed more kind to send an unarmed boat to inform them of the fact than to occupy the town by force of arms. He wished to calm any apprehensions of harsh treatment, and would carefully respect the persons and property of all citizens who submitted to the lawful authority of the United States; so long as they respected this authority and acted in good faith, municipal affairs would be left in the hands of the citizens.

The Mayor informed Commander Rodgers that the place had been garrisoned by two companies of Florida troops who had left the previous night; that the Mayor and council gladly received the assurances given, and placed the town

in the hands of Captain Rodgers, who then recommended them to hoist the National flag over Fort Marion, which was at once done by order of the Mayor.

Of a population of two thousand, about one-fifth had left. "The men acquiesce in the condition of affairs we are now establishing. There is much violent and pestilent feeling among the women. They seem to mistake treason for courage, and have a desire to figure as heroines."¹ Three heavy 32-pounders and two VIII-inch howitzers, with some shot and powder, were found in the fort.

Commander Godon, in the Mohican, with the Pocahontas and Potomska, had been sent to St. Simon's Inlet, which they entered on the 8th, and anchored within two miles of the forts. The following morning they proceeded in, and finding the forts apparently abandoned, three armed boats were sent to St. Simon's, and a suitable force to Jekyl Islands. Two strong earthworks of twelve embrasures and several well-constructed magazines were found on St. Simon's, which commanded the entrance and the Sound; the guns had been removed; a few X-inch shot remained, which showed the calibre of the former batteries. The two batteries on Jekyl Island were of greater strength. The outer one commanding the main channel had a bomb-proof constructed of palmetto logs, sand-bags, and railroad iron, well supported and braced within. Three casemated guns, carriages, and ammunition had been removed. The other battery, five hundred yards landward, consisted of two casemates, and arrangements for four barbette guns, magazine, and hot-shot furnace.

On February 16th, General Mercer, in command at Brunswick, Ga., informed General R. E. Lee that all of the guns

¹ Commander Rodgers's report.

had been removed from St. Simon's and Jekyl Islands, and solicited instructions as follows: "Before finally evacuating this position, I beg to bring to the consideration of the General the question of burning the town of Brunswick, for the moral effect it would produce upon the enemy." . . .

No orders appear. The General may not have appreciated the "moral effect" of burning the property of their own people, which, if left undisturbed, could have been of little advantage to their enemy, even though he had thought fit to occupy the place.

The abandonment of the St. Simon's and Jekyl Islands batteries had awakened the fears of General Trapier, who informed General Lee that the defence of Fernandina depended upon them, to which General Lee on February 24th replied as follows: "The withdrawal of the troops from St. Simon's and Jekyl Islands can only affect the inland communication between Brunswick and Cumberland Sound, rendering it less secure and certain. The batteries commanding the principal entrance into Cumberland Sound can be as easily turned through St. Andrew's Sound as St. Simon's, which is nearer and as accessible as the latter. I had hoped that guns could be obtained in time to defend those rear approaches, but as I now see no possibility of doing so, and as the means are incompetent in your opinion for its defence, you are authorized to retire both from Cumberland and Amelia Islands to the main land."

The question here presents itself with singular force: Had the National troops held Norfolk Navy Yard only long enough to destroy the three thousand cannon stored there, what would have been the ability of the Confederacy to establish defences against a respectable naval force?

On February 10th General Lee wrote from Savannah to Governor Brown of Georgia as follows: "I have the honor

to receive your letter of the 8th in reference to the withdrawal of the batteries from St. Simon's and Jekyl Islands. . . . I find it impossible to obtain guns to secure it as I desire, and now everything is requisite to fortify this city."

After an examination of the St. Simon's and Jekyl Islands earthworks, Commander Godon went in the Potomska to the town of Brunswick and found the railroad depot and wharf had been set on fire and a train of cars on the point of leaving. The Mohican and Pocahontas were then brought up and anchored off the town and a large party of armed men were sent on shore; the town was entirely deserted and house furniture generally removed. Proclamations were posted, "urging the inhabitants to return to their homes and promising protection to the property of all good citizens." The landing parties returned to their vessels; no houses that were not open were entered, and no property of any kind was taken.

The Pocahontas and Potomska were then sent up Turtle River as far as navigable for vessels of their draught. On their return the Pocahontas on the 11th sent a boat on shore in the vicinity of Brunswick to procure fresh beef for the crew. Returning, the boat had scarcely left the beach when she was fired into by a party of 40 Confederate soldiers; two in the boat were killed, two seriously and four others slightly wounded. Assistant-Surgeon Rhoades, in charge of the boat, was then called upon to surrender, which he refused to do, and aided by Paymaster Kitchen and the uninjured portion of the crew, pulled as well as they could for the vessel. The Mohican and the Potomska, observing the attack, opened fire with shells on the enemy, who had been joined by a considerable force. The brave conduct of Surgeon Rhoades received high commendation.

Leaving the Mohican in these waters, Commander Godon

proceeded on the 13th in the Potomska, accompanied by the Pocahontas, to open the inland route to the Altamaha; in doing this he had to remove two double rows of piles several miles apart. They had been sawed off at low water mark to make them more difficult to remove. Their removal took so much time that he did not arrive near Darien until late; he there found two steamers leaving under a heavy head of steam. The brass sleeves of the propeller shaft of the Potomska had given out, which induced him to return to Doboy Island. Darien, as well as Brunswick, had been deserted.

The operations against Fernandina led to the abandonment of the entire coast line defence by batteries, and to points sufficiently high up on the rivers to embarrass an attack by gunboats, except the defences of Charleston, and of Pulaski, the outer defence of Savannah, which was soon to fall. Skidaway and Green Island batteries were reported abandoned, and the guns taken for the defence of the immediate vicinity of Savannah.

After establishing the lawful authority of the National flag at St. Augustine, the Wabash proceeded to the entrance of the St. John's River, where the admiral had the day before sent several gunboats. The bar had been sounded and buoyed, but in the rough state of the sea only the Ellen, having a lighter draught, could enter, which she did, with two armed launches of the flag-ship. The earthworks in face were found deserted, and the American ensign was hoisted on the lighthouse as a sign of quiet possession.

At high water on the afternoon of the 10th, the gunboats Ottawa, Seneca, and Pembina crossed the bar and at sunset anchored near Mayport Mills, three miles up the river. Every vessel had on board a company of troops of the Fourth New Hampshire.

The Wabash then left the anchorage for Mosquito Inlet,

fifty-one miles south of St. Augustine. It had been used to some extent by small vessels transporting arms from Nassau. The Penguin and the Henry Andrew had been sent some days before, the first-named to remain off the inlet and the second to pass within and protect from destruction a large amount of Government live-oak ready for shipment.

The commanding officers of those vessels, with 43 armed men, had gone some fifteen or eighteen miles up the river, and having returned within sight of the Henry Andrew, the line of order was no longer observed. The two commanding officers, quite in advance of the other boats, landed at an abandoned earthwork, near a dense growth of live-oak with underbrush, and were fired upon from the thicket. Lieutenant-Commander Budd and Acting Master Mather with three of the boat's crew were killed, and the two other men in the boat were wounded and taken prisoners. As the other boats came up they were fired into and retreated up the stream. Under cover of the night they passed out to the vessels with one man killed. The flag-officer was then lying off the inlet. In his report he says: "The loss of gallant lives has expiated the error of judgment which enthusiastic zeal had induced."

The officers and crews of the gunboats that the flag-officer had seen safely cross the difficult bar of St. John's River before leaving for Mosquito Inlet, saw the western sky illuminated throughout the night, and conjectured rightly that the Confederates were burning saw-mills and other buildings at Jacksonville. At daylight they were under way and at noon at anchor off Jacksonville. The troops were landed without delay and the outskirts of the town picketed. Two pieces of heavy ordnance, that the enemy had in transit, were found on the wharf, but time had failed him to carry them farther.

The Ottawa proceeded eighty miles up the St. John's to

Orange Mills, as far as the draught of the former would permit, and the *Ellen* passed some miles beyond; they then returned to Jacksonville. In a few days the *Darlington*, the small steamer captured at Fernandina, was repaired, put in service, and on the 17th was off Jacksonville. Lieutenant-Commander Stevens employed her in the recovery of the famous yacht *America*, that had been used in blockade-running and on the arrival of the National forces had been sunk in a creek.

The gunboats thereafter patrolled the navigable waters of the St. John's, to the entire subversion of the Confederates getting arms through the small inlets of Florida, to which they had been compelled to resort through a vigorous blockade of all of the harbors for vessels of even ten feet draught. The Confederates were not content, however, with having the gunboats in the upper waters of that river, and again endeavored to exclude them, but the effort proved wholly fruitless, and cost them nine more rifled guns in the earth-work on St. John's Bluff, the September following.

After the operations on the coast of Florida were fully completed, the flag-officer returned to Port Royal. During his absence the army had planted batteries of rifled guns and heavy columbiads on the sand-hills of Tybee Island, for the purpose of reducing Fort Pulaski, which the flag-officer described as a "purely military operation, the result of laborious and scientific preparation, and of consummate skill and bravery in execution. . . . General Hunter, with a generous spirit long to be remembered, permitted the navy to be represented on this interesting occasion by allowing a detachment of seamen and officers from this ship to serve one of the breaching batteries."

Commander C. R. P. Rodgers with a detachment of men reached Tybee on the morning of the 10th of April, just be-

fore the firing commenced, and too late to participate that day. As many of the artillerists were quite untrained, until ranges were obtained the practice was inaccurate. On the following day, although there was a high wind, the firing from both the rifled guns and columbiads was excellent, "the former boring like augurs into the brick face of the wall, the latter striking like trip-hammers and breaking off great masses of masonry that had been cut loose by the rifles."

The four nearest batteries were more than sixteen hundred yards from the fort; four rifled guns in battery Sigel, one of those nearest the fort, had been assigned to the men from the Wabash. The batteries were occupied at daylight, and "kept up a steady and well-directed fire until the flag of the fort was hauled down at 2 P.M." Commander Rodgers commended the conduct of Lieutenant Irwin, Master Robertson, and Midshipmen M. L. Johnson and F. H. Pearson, and also of petty officers Lewis Boun and George H. Wood.

"Before the fort surrendered the barbette guns had been silenced and many of them dismounted. The breach was practicable for storming in two places, and the projectiles were passing through and knocking down the opposite wall, which protected the magazine, so that the garrison was convinced that in an hour or so the magazine must be blown up."¹

The heavy XIII-inch mortars inflicted little injury; the shells falling upon the casemates did not seem to shake them at all, and those that fell within the fort rolled into the deep furrows that had been made to receive them, where they burst without doing injury. Less than one year had passed since the seizure by the Confederates of all of the forts within their power, and again the National ensign

¹ Commander Rodgers's report.

floated over three of them. The blockading duties did not prevent the officers commanding vessels from more pronounced action when circumstances appeared to favor it. Lieutenant-Commanding A. C. Rhind, in the *Crusader*, at North Edisto, had sent a boat's crew to assist a Government agent. In performing this duty Master Urann was severely wounded by the enemy. Colonel Fellows, Fifty-fifth regiment of Pennsylvania, kindly detailed a force under Lieutenant Bedell to accompany Captain Rhind. A force of 60 men with a light field howitzer reached the vicinity of the enemy at 3 A.M. of the 19th of April, but not without discovery and the precipitate flight of the enemy. Shortly after daylight a considerable force of mounted riflemen were seen advancing rapidly. They opened fire, but after a skirmish of half an hour retired as hastily as they had advanced. In this affair three of the sailors were wounded, and the force returned unmolested at leisure to the vessel.

On the 29th, the same officer on board of the *Hale*, Lieutenant-Commanding Gillis, with Assistant-Surgeon Brintnall, Mate Henry Parsons, 22 men, and a boat armed with a howitzer, proceeded to destroy a battery of the enemy near the junction of the Dawho, Paw Paw, and South Edisto Rivers. When the *Hale* was within eighteen hundred yards, the battery opened fire and continued as the bends of the river favored. One long reach had to be made under a raking fire, but the shells from the *Hale* had been so effective that when the vessel was making a direct course for the battery the enemy abandoned it in haste. The wood in the rear was shelled; 20 men were landed and reached the work by passing over some three hundred yards of marshy ground. Two fine 24-pounder field pieces were found, one of them loaded and primed. This piece was discharged against the other one to destroy it, and the second was destroyed by other

means. All of the woodwork was piled under the carriages and set on fire. This was accomplished by 11 A.M., and the Hale then attempted to ascend the Paw Paw to a rice-mill for the purpose of destroying a vessel lying there, but owing to the ignorance of the pilot, when a mile within the river, the Hale grounded and remained fast until 5 P.M. It was too late to accomplish the object, and the ignorance of the pilot made it necessary to return by the Dawho and run the gauntlet of an ambuscade that they well knew would be prepared at a favorable point near Slamm's Bluff. That locality was reached at 8 P.M., and of course proper disposition made to receive the close fire of the enemy. As anticipated, the enemy opened a heavy fire upon the Hale with field pieces and small arms. The men then jumped to their guns and replied with grape, canister, and shells. No one was injured on the vessel. A 32-pounder was rendered useless by a shot knocking out a piece of the muzzle.

The blockaders in Doboy Sound enlivened the dull routine by ascending the Riceborough River with the object of destroying a brig supposed to have entered through Sapelo Sound. Lieutenant-Commanding A. A. Semmes in the Wamsutta, accompanied by the Potomska, on the 26th of April started up this narrow and tortuous stream. The following morning they had reached within a mile of Dorchester, and were informed that the smoke seen the previous day was from the burning brig. The object of their visit having been accomplished, the vessels began a difficult return. At Woodville Island they received the fire of the enemy from small arms at close range. Two men were killed on the first fire. In transit the vessels were of mutual assistance, the one with grape and canister enfilading, as it were, the sharpshooters that attacked the other. The vessels got out of their difficult position without further loss of life,

and it was supposed had inflicted much greater loss on the assailants. The records of our former enemy, so far as published, give no details of these minor affairs.

A very interesting episode of the war was that of Robert Small, a slave and the pilot of the Planter carrying that vessel to the blockading force off Charleston. The account given is substantially the report of the flag-officer to the Department. The vessel was engaged in the transportation of ordnance and army stores. On the morning of the 13th of May, the Planter was lying at the wharf close to army headquarters, with steam up and the captain on shore. Small had the fasts cast off, and with a Confederate flag flying passed the forts, saluting them as usual by blowing the whistle, and passing beyond their line of fire, hauled down his flag and hoisted a white one just in time to avoid the fire from a blockading vessel. The Planter was armed with a 32-pounder pivot gun, a 24-pounder howitzer, and had on board four heavy guns, one of which was a VII-inch rifle, intended for a new fort on the middle ground in Charleston Harbor. Eight men, five women, and three children were on board of the vessel. The flag-officer remarked: "Robert Small is superior to any who have come within our lines, intelligent as many of them have been. His information has been most interesting, and portions of it of the utmost importance." Small afterward served most usefully and with great intelligence on the Southern coast as pilot throughout the civil war, and later, for several sessions as a member of Congress from South Carolina.

Acting under definite but not compulsory instructions, the officers commanding blockading vessels were vigilant in following up by reconnoissance the changed lines of defence which had been established in such manner as not to allow an attack by any considerable number of gunboats.

Commander G. A. Prentiss in the Albatross passed into Winyaw Bay, the entrance to Georgetown, S. C., on May 21st, accompanied by the Norwich. A redoubt near the lighthouse was found deserted. Within, on South Island, an extensive work was seen, with apparently several large barbette guns. On a nearer approach, they were found to be what are known as "Quakers." From this view Cat Island was visible, and on it a well-built fort, with cavalry in the skirts of the woodland, who were scattered by shells. The vessels found these works deserted also and in like manner armed with "Quaker" guns. The work was quadrangular, fitted with platforms for mounting ten guns, with bomb-proofs, magazines, and furnace for hot shot. The woodwork was collected and set on fire, as also a large quantity of timber intended for obstructing the channel.

The following day the vessels passed up the river to Georgetown and steamed slowly along the wharves, the muzzles of the guns within thirty yards of the houses. A brig loaded with turpentine was set on fire to prevent the approach of the vessels, but they continued on, passed the vessel on fire and turned with some difficulty in the narrow channel to retrace their route, "tarrying to see if the town authorities were disposed to communicate." Commander Prentiss had judiciously "sent word to the Union men to make no demonstration whatever, as he was not prepared to hold the place permanently. A few, however, appeared on the wharves, and indicated by gestures or words their joy at seeing us, while the masses of citizens kept aloof. . . . While passing up, a woman appeared in the belfry of a church or city hall, and spread a rebel flag over the bell. I was greatly tempted to send on shore and seize it, but refrained, from the consideration that a contest in the streets

would have compelled me to destroy the city, involving the ruin of the innocent with the guilty."¹

From information derived from Robert Small, a reconnoissance of Stono Inlet was made, and on the next day the gunboats Unadilla, Pembina, and Ottawa crossed the bar under Commander Marchand, and proceeded up the river to the old fort opposite Legaréville. The enemy fired the barracks on the approach of the vessels. A picket guard of six at the magazine of the fort were taken prisoners. On the 29th of May the Pawnee crossed the bar, the Huron having entered the day before; the inlet was entered at extreme high water, nevertheless the Pawnee struck heavily twenty times. Nothing was more trying on officers commanding vessels than thumping them over bars, often with great risk of leaving them there.

The Pawnee ascended to Legaréville; from thence Captain Drayton in the Ottawa, a smaller vessel than his own command, accompanied by the Huron and Pembina, reached the last bend of the river below Wappoo Cut, when the enemy opened fire from a very heavy rifled gun, some of the shot falling only a little short of the vessels. The Pembina and Huron were left for the night a little above Newtown Creek. The removal of a few piles from an obstruction enabled Captain Drayton to bring the Pawnee up the river, which he did, with the Ellen accompanying, as far as Newtown Creek. From that point Captain Drayton continued on in the Ellen, and rounding a point they were in sight of the fortification from which they had been fired upon the previous day. From Parrott rifled guns, shells fired on board of the Ellen, with 16° elevation and 20' fuzes, just reached the enemy. He replied with accuracy from the heavy rifle before mentioned.

¹ Prentiss's report.

After a dozen shots on each side, the *Ellen* returned with such information as was thus obtainable. Contrabands informed Captain Drayton that torpedoes had been laid in the river above. He adds in his report, that "even were this not the case, I do not think the gunboats could go beyond where I had been, and not stick in the mud. To sum up, we are in as complete possession of the river as of Port Royal, and can land and protect the army whenever it wishes. Beyond the reach of our guns I cannot, of course, be responsible, for it must, to a certain extent, then look out for itself." With a good map, the military student will note an opening here for successful operations through information which the admiral justly styled of "the utmost importance."

The battery of the enemy was near Wappoo Cut, and consisted of a heavy rifled gun and seven heavy columbiads. The vessels above mentioned remained for some time in the river.

The Upper St. John's River, running nearly north and south, important for the transportation of small arms, that for some time had been obtained through some of the many insignificant inlets of the peninsula, was patrolled by several gunboats. There were many men in that region who had been actually driven into the Confederate ranks, and who had escaped into the wilds of Florida. To hound them, a set of men known as "Regulators" were permitted to remain at home. One of these, known as George Huston, commanded a squad and resided near Black Creek. He boasted of having hung the negro pilot when Captain Budd was shot near New Smyrna. It was supposed that "his capture would secure the general tranquillity of persons along the river, most of whom would gladly acknowledge the authority of the Government of the United States were they not in fear of violence from men of this character." To capture him 40

men were detailed from the Seneca, and a reserve of 30 men from the Patroon, under the command of Lieutenant John G. Sproston of the Seneca. The party landed at early daylight and proceeded rapidly to Huston's house. A negro woman saw the party and gave the alarm. Huston appeared at the door armed with a double-barrelled gun, two pistols and a bowie knife; to a demand to surrender he fired a pistol at Sproston within a few feet, killing him instantly. He fired the other pistol and the gun, wounding a sailor slightly, and was shot and bayoneted at the same time; he was brought on board and died within a day or two, his wounds being necessarily fatal. The party not having been thrown around the house, several persons escaped who had fired from it without effect. The death of this officer was a loss to the navy, and was deeply regretted by his many friends in and out of the service. He was a gallant officer of great professional merit, and had with others, on the 13th of September, 1861, distinguished himself in the destruction of the privateer Judah at the Pensacola Navy Yard; and afterward as executive officer of the Seneca in the battle of Port Royal, and on other occasions.

While in those waters the Seneca recovered two field-pieces and carriages at a creek below Yellow Bluffs. It was known that a certain Neils Johnson had been present in throwing them into the water, and he was sent for. He acted the simpleton, but he was informed that his feigned stupidity would not answer, and that he would be held as a prisoner until he aided in the recovery of the guns. He no longer feigned, but wept earnestly and said he could not do so, as the "Regulators" would kill him. A compromise was effected, resulting in the recovery of the guns, upon his being given a paper stating that he aided under penalty of otherwise being shot. At Yellow Bluffs, before this occur-

rence, the Seneca was fired on at a distance of sixty to one hundred yards by a company of "Regulators," and two of the crew dangerously wounded. Although the attack was wholly unexpected, and the commanding officer, pilot, and others were grouped, and the mass of fire was directed at them, none of the group were struck, although many bullets hit the hammock netting and the bulwark opposite.

As stated before, the enemy were most desirous of closing the upper part of the St. John's, to permit the transportation of small arms through the inlets of the peninsula, and for that purpose had erected a battery of seven VIII-inch and two IV $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch rifled guns on St. John's Bluff, some seven miles from the mouth of the river.

Commander Steedman in the Port Royal suggested that a co-operating land force should be sent to secure the guns when silenced by the vessels under his command. General Mitchell, then in command at Port Royal, promptly sent a force under General Brannan, which was landed at a favorable point. The gunboats attacked the battery on the 5th of October, which led to the hasty abandonment of the works and the seizure of them by our troops. The armed steamer Darlington, captured, as the reader will remember, by Commander Rodgers at Fernandina, Lieutenant-Commander Williams, with Company E Forty-seventh Pennsylvania regiment on board, and the Hale, Lieutenant-Commander Snell, ascended the river to Lake Beresford, two hundred and thirty miles, and captured the steamer Morton, one of the best on the river and engaged in the transportation of arms and munitions. General Brannan wrote to the flag-officer: "Commander Steedman exhibited a zeal and perseverance in every instance, whether in aiding my forces to effect a landing, the ascent of St. John's river two hundred and thirty miles, or the assistance to one of my trans-

ports, unfortunately injured in crossing the bar, that is deserving of all praise."

An expedition designed to destroy the Pocotaligo bridge was less fortunate in its results from a series of miscarriages. The naval force, as before, was under Commander Steedman in the Port Royal, and the troops again under the command of General Brannan. Officers commanding naval vessels were assembled on board the Vermont and received instructions as to order of sailing, etc. In aid of the transports, every naval vessel carried an assigned quota of troops. At sunset the vessels proceeded some miles and anchored in the mouth of Broad River. Four armed launches in tow of a small tug carrying one hundred troops were sent in advance to a point some two miles below Mackey's Point, from whence half the force was to proceed to Mackey's, and the other part to Cuthbert's Landing to capture the pickets. The guide to Mackey's was incompetent and the picket was not captured; the other force was successful in that object.

Soon after midnight the signal was made for the vessels to get under way; the Paul Jones with transport De Ford proceeded up the river, apparently without observing the fact that they were unaccompanied. These vessels anchored above Mackey's at 4.30 A.M. The failure of the naval vessels was due to the fact that the Conemaugh, the third vessel in line, did not see the signal to get under way, and when she moved, passed on the wrong side of the lights placed to carry them over shoal ground. She then grounded and disarranged the line, and the Marblehead and Water Witch collided. As a result of these mishaps the vessels did not leave Broad River until daylight; however, they reached Mackey's and landed the troops on board by 10 A.M., those on board of the De Ford and the Paul Jones having landed on arrival.

At the request of General Brannan the Uncas proceeded

up the Pocotaligo River and the Patroon and the Vixen up the Coosawhatchie, the last-named to cover the landing of Colonel Barton's forces from the Planter. The services of these vessels are officially commended. Also at the request of the general, the three howitzers of the Wabash, in charge of Lieutenant Phenix and Ensigns Wallace, Pearson, and Adams, were landed and sent to the front; the conduct of these officers and the men under their command was highly commended by the general commanding the troops. A message from the general that he was falling back was received at 5 P.M. The next day (23d) the troops re-embarked and the whole force returned to Port Royal. The escape of the picket was in itself sufficient to make the move abortive, and the failure of the vessels to arrive for five hours after those leading, was also enough, as the troops of the enemy in half that time could be sent to the line of railroad from Savannah and from Charleston.

While the intended results of the expedition, to make a lodgment on the Charleston and Savannah Railroad, were not attained, the services of the naval co-operating force were duly acknowledged by the military commander in his official report.

On the afternoon of January 30, 1863, the gunboats Commodore McDonough, Lieutenant-Commander George Bacon, and the Isaac Smith, Acting Lieutenant F. S. Conover, were lying in Stono Inlet. At 4.40 P.M. the Isaac Smith got under way and proceeded up the river above Legaréville, for the purpose of making a reconnoissance, and being fired upon from concealed and unsuspected heavy field batteries, hotly engaged them. The McDonough proceeded to her relief, but before getting within supporting distance a white flag was seen flying over the Isaac Smith. A nearer approach showed that the vessel was apparently aground¹ and two of her

¹ Confederate reports say "she dropped anchor and unconditionally surrendered." No surrender of a vessel has come to the knowledge of the writer that

boats were taking the officers and men on shore. Three field batteries then opened on the McDonough, one of six guns, on John's Island; the fire from the enemy was at once returned, the engines reversed and the vessel dropped down the stream.

The report of the officer commanding the Smith states that he anchored opposite Grimball's plantation, four and a half miles from the inlet; an excellent lookout was at the mast-head and nothing suspicious was seen. A few minutes later a battery of three rifled guns on James Island six hundred yards distant, and concealed by trees, opened fire; the vessel at once was got under way and engaged the battery. At the same time two other batteries lower down, on John's Island, also opened fire on the vessel. An endeavor was made to pass down, but for a mile or more the vessel was exposed to a raking fire and unable to reply, except occasionally from a pivot gun. Passing by the two batteries, at an estimated distance of from two to four hundred yards, a broadside of shell and grape was delivered, but the vessel received a shot in her steam-chimney which at once disabled her, and there was nothing left to do but surrender. Eight men had been killed and 17 wounded, some of them mortally. The batteries were properly supposed to be composed of siege and field guns, and their fire was supplemented by a number of riflemen on or near the banks of the river.¹

The Isaac Smith was a vessel of four hundred and fifty-three tons, purchased in 1861, and was armed with one 30-pounder Parrott and eight VIII-inch columbiads.

was not *unconditional*. January 31st the McDonough reports the Isaac Smith "still on shore at the same place. She must have been injured below the water-line or else they would certainly have gotten her off at high tide this morning."

¹ "Their artillery force was composed entirely of field and siege guns brought down and concealed in the bushes" (report of Lieutenant Conover).

CHAPTER IV.

RAID OF THE CONFEDERATE IRONCLADS OFF CHARLESTON.—ATTACK ON FORT MALLISTER.

EARLY in the morning of January 31, 1863, two ironclad vessels, known afterward as the Palmetto State and the Chicora, built and lying in Charleston, came out of the main channel. A thick haze and an entire calm favored the movement. The Powhatan and the Canandaigua, the two most powerful vessels on the blockade, were temporarily absent, coaling at Port Royal, leaving only one vessel of size built for war purposes, the Housatonic, with nine other vessels blockading. The others, except the gunboats Ottawa and Unadilla, were purchased vessels whose steam-pipes, chimneys, and machinery were much exposed when under fire. Such vessels, built of iron, if penetrated by a shot or shell would receive little injury from the ingress, but if it were not arrested by some solid body within, on its egress a whole sheet would be carried away, perhaps at the water-line, and the vessel might sink at once, as did the Hatteras, after an engagement with the Alabama off Galveston, Texas. The Mercedita, Captain F. S. Stellwagen, just such an iron vessel as described, was the first approached by a ram. In the early part of the evening she had overhauled a transport passing with troops and afterward returned to her position and anchored. About 4 A.M., one of the armor-plated vessels (the Palmetto

State) suddenly appeared through the mist. She was hailed and an order given to fire, but it was found the ram was so close that the guns of the *Mercedita* could not be sufficiently depressed to strike her. A heavy shell from a rifled gun on the ram entered the starboard side of the *Mercedita*, passed through the Normandy condenser and the steam-drum of her port boiler, exploding against the port side of the vessel and tearing a hole four or five feet square. The shell killed the gunner in his room, and the escape of steam three firemen and coal-heavers, and badly scalded three others. The engine was disabled, and as demanded, an officer was sent on board of the attacking vessel and gave a parole for the officers and men "not to take up arms against the Confederate States during the war, unless legally and regularly exchanged as prisoners of war." Repairs of a temporary character enabled the *Mercedita* to reach Port Royal during the day without being towed.

The rams then approached the *Keystone State*. An extract of the log-book of that vessel, over the signature of her commanding officer, is more circumstantial than his official report given also in the appendix to the Report of the Secretary of the Navy, and therefore forms the basis of what appears below.

Between 4 and 5 A.M. a gun, supposed from the *Mercedita*, was heard, lights were seen, and soon a dark object a little ahead of her, and a column of black smoke rising as was supposed from a tug; another column of black smoke was seen more to the north and east. The suspicions of the captain were aroused, and he ordered the forward rifle trained upon the vessel approaching from the *Mercedita*. The battery was made ready, engineer directed to have steam, the cable was slipped and the vessel was under steerage way. The vessel was hailed, a reply of "Halloo" with unintelligi-

ble words following, and a gun was fired which was at once responded to by the ram. The order was given to fire the starboard battery as the guns would bear, the helm was put aport for a northeast course, when a ram was seen on each quarter. The shell from the enemy had entered forward and there was fire in the fore-hold ; in ten minutes it was found the water was shoaling and the course was changed to southeast for about ten minutes longer, to extinguish the fire, which was supposed to have been effected, but it broke out again. After it was extinguished, full steam was ordered, a black smoke was seen and steered for, with the intention of running the vessel down, and approaching exchanged shots rapidly with the ram, striking her repeatedly but making no impression, while every shot from her was striking. About 6.17 a shell entering on the port side forward of the forward guard destroyed the steam-chimneys, filling all of the forward part of the ship with steam. The port boiler emptied, the ship heeled to starboard nearly to the guard, and the water from the boilers and two shot-holes under water led to the impression that the vessel was sinking ; eighteen inches of water was reported in the well. The steam forward cut off the supply of ammunition for the time. Boats were got ready for lowering, the signal-books thrown overboard, and also some small arms. "The ram being so near, and the ship helpless, and the men slaughtered by almost every discharge of the enemy, I ordered the colors to be hauled down, but finding the enemy were still firing upon us directed the colors to be rehoisted and resumed our fire from the after battery. Now the enemy, either injured or to avoid the squadron approaching, sheered off toward the harbor, exchanging shots with the Housatonic, which vessel was in chase. Fore and aft sail was put on the ship, sent yards aloft and bent sails ; the Memphis took the vessel in

tow for Port Royal. The port battery was run in to heel the ship, to prevent inflow from shot-holes at the water-line."¹ Surgeon Gotwold and 19 men were killed and 20 wounded, the greater number of the casualties being caused by the steam.

The Housatonic, Captain William Rogers Taylor, senior officer present on the blockade, was at anchor farthest to the north and east, near Rattlesnake Shoal. The firing had been heard, but as it was a very usual occurrence, no apprehension of attack was entertained; the cause of the firing was conjectured to be due to an attempt to run the blockade. At early dawn the Housatonic got under way and shaped her course for three vessels, one of which was known as the Augusta, next in station on the line of blockade. Some time previous this vessel had made a night signal which was not understood. As the Housatonic proceeded, a black smoke was seen ahead, and as the light increased, "an ironclad ram bearing the Confederate flag" was made out, steering toward the entrance of the harbor, and the Augusta was firing; later, another ram was seen to the southward and westward, also making for the harbor. The Housatonic was sheered in as near as the soundings would permit, and opened fire on the nearest ram, which deviated twice from her course in order to return the fire. The Housatonic was not struck, however, and it was supposed she had injured the pilot-house of the ram and shot away her flag-staff.

The rams entered Charleston Harbor, and were not seen until late in the afternoon, when the mist partially lifted and showed them at anchor in the Maffitt Channel, near Fort Moultrie, visible from the assigned anchorage of the Housatonic.

¹ See Le Roy's Report.

The following proclamation was issued :

HEADQUARTERS NAVAL AND LAND FORCES,
CHARLESTON, S. C., January 31, 1863.

At the hour of five o'clock this morning the Confederate States naval forces on this station attacked the United States blockading fleet off the harbor of the city of Charleston, and sunk, dispersed, or drove off and out of sight, for the time, the entire hostile fleet. Therefore, we, the undersigned commanders, respectively, of the Confederate States naval and land forces in this quarter, hereby formally declare the blockade by the United States of the said city of Charleston, S. C., to be raised by a superior force of the Confederate States, from and after this 31st day of January, A.D. 1863.

G. T. BEAUREGARD,

General Commanding.

D. N. INGRAHAM,

Commanding Naval Forces in South Carolina.

Official : THOMAS JORDAN, Chief-of-Staff.

The results of the engagement are: two vessels sunk, four set on fire, and the remainder driven away.

Yesterday afternoon General Beauregard placed a steamer at the disposal of the foreign consuls to see for themselves that no blockade existed. The French and Spanish Consuls accepted the invitation. The British Consul, with the commander of the British war-steamer Petrel, had previously gone five miles beyond the usual anchorage of the blockaders, and could see nothing of them with their glasses.

Late in the evening four blockaders reappeared, keeping far out. This evening a large number of blockaders are in sight, but keep steam up ready to run. The foreign consuls here held a meeting last night. They are unanimously of the opinion that the blockade of this port is legally raised. [This information appended is not attested.]

In relation to this extraordinary proclamation, Colonel Leckler and others wrote Admiral Dupont as follows :

HEADQUARTERS 176TH REGIMENT PENNSYLVANIA MILITIA,
ST. HELENA SOUND, S. C., February 21, 1863.

SIR: Having seen a proclamation issued by General Beauregard and Commodore Ingraham to the effect that upon the morning of the 31st ult. they had, by force of arms, succeeded in dispersing the blockading fleet which was lying off Charleston Harbor, and also a statement purporting to have come from the English Consul for that port, and the commanding officer of the English man-of-war *Petrel*, that they had gone out to a point five miles beyond the usual anchorage of the blockading fleet, and that not a single vessel could be seen, even with the aid of powerful glasses, and that, consequently, the blockade had been most effectually raised, and knowing, as we do, the above statement to be utterly false in every particular, we feel constrained to tender our evidence as corroboratory of that already furnished.

On the evening of January 29th, the One Hundred and Seventy-sixth Regiment Pennsylvania Militia (with which we are connected) left Morehead City, N. C., on board steamer *Cossack*, destined for Port Royal. Upon the morning of the 31st, when near Charleston, could hear firing distinctly. Upon our arrival off the harbor, which was at about 8.30 A.M., found lying there the blockading squadron, some of which were at anchor, and also the prize steamer *Princess Royal*. The distance from land at which they were was estimated to be from four to five miles; and although the morning was somewhat hazy, yet the land could be plainly seen on each side of the harbor. Vessels could be seen in the inlets, and by the aid of a glass a fort, said to have been Sumter, was visible. We were right in the midst of the fleet, so near as to be able to carry on a conversation with the *Housatonic*—were boarded by officers from it and the *Quaker City*. We remained there until about nine o'clock. Shortly after we departed, the *Princess Royal* followed.

Being thus near the site of the engagement, and so soon after it came off, we do not hesitate in the least to pronounce the statement that the blockade was raised not only absurd, but utterly and wilfully false in every particular. And the statement of the English Consul and the commander of the *Petrel*, that the squadron could not be seen even with the aid of powerful glasses, is one equally false, and one that impels us to conclude that it would require a powerful glass, truly, to be able to discover one particle of truth or honesty in the composition of these gentlemen.

The entire regiment can substantiate the above facts, and burn with indignation that gentlemen occupying high stations, as they do, should resort to such base fabrications to prop up a failing cause.

We have the honor, sir, to be your most obedient servants,

A. A. LECKLER, Colonel Commanding 176th Regiment.

W. F. FUNDENBURG, Surgeon 176th.

TAYLOR C. NEWBURY, Commanding Steamship Cossack.

Rear-Admiral S. F. DUPONT,

Commanding South Atlantic Blockading Squadron.

At an earlier date the commanding officers of vessels blockading that were sufficiently near to be cognizant of the facts wrote the following letter :

U. S. STEAMER NEW IRONSIDES,
OFF CHARLESTON, February 10, 1863.

We, the undersigned officers, commanding various vessels of the blockading squadron off Charleston, have seen the proclamation of General Beauregard and Commodore Ingraham, herewith appended, as also the results of the so-called engagements, viz. : two vessels sunk, four set on fire, and the remainder driven away ; and also the statement that the British Consul and the commander of the British war-steamer Petrel had previously gone five miles beyond the usual anchorage of the blockaders, and could see nothing of them with their glasses.

We deem it our duty to state that the so-called results are *false in every particular*. No vessels were sunk, none were set on fire seriously. Two vessels alone were injured of consequence : the Mercedita had her boiler exploded by a shell from the only gun fired at her, when surprised by an attack by night. A thick haze was prevailing ; and the Keystone State also had her steam-chest injured at the moment of attempting to run down one of the rams. The Keystone State was at once assisted by the Memphis, which vessel exchanged shots with the iron ram as she was withdrawing toward the bar, after having fired at the Keystone State, as did also the Quaker City. So hasty was the retreat of the rams, that, although they might have perceived that the Keystone State had received serious damage, no attempt was ever made to approach her. The Stettin and Ottawa, at the extreme end of the line, did not get under way from their position till after the firing had ceased, and the Stettin merely saw the *black smoke* as the rams disappeared over the

bar. The Flag was alongside the Mercedita after, it seems, she had yielded to the ram, supposing herself sinking. The rams withdrew hastily toward the harbor, and on their way were fired at by the Housatonic and Augusta, until both had got beyond reach of their guns. They anchored under the protection of their forts, and remained there.

No vessel, *ironclad or other*, passed out over the bar after the return of the rams in shore. The Unadilla was not aware of the attack until the Housatonic commenced firing, when she moved out toward that vessel from her anchorage.

The Housatonic was never *beyond the usual line of blockade*. The Quaker City, in the forenoon, picked up her anchor which she had slipped to repair to the point of firing. The Flag communicated with the senior officer on board the Housatonic that forenoon, soon after the firing ended, and the blockade continued as before. No vessel ran in or out of the port that day, *nor was any attempt made to run the blockade*. The Keystone State necessarily was ordered to Port Royal for repairs. The Unadilla returned to her usual anchorage, after communicating with the senior officer, where she remained during the day. *Throughout the day two small tug-boats* remained apparently in attendance on the rams, under cover of Forts Moultrie and Beauregard. The prize steamer Princess Royal, which had been lying alongside of the Housatonic, was despatched to Port Royal, by order of the senior officer, *one hour and a half after the ram had returned to the cover of the batteries* and the firing had ceased, or about 9.30 A.M.

These are facts, and we do not hesitate to state that no vessel did come out beyond the bar after the return of the rams, at between 7 and 8 A.M., to the cover of the forts. We believe the statement that any vessel came anywhere near the usual anchorage of the blockaders, *or up to the bar*, after the withdrawal of the rams, to be deliberately and knowingly false.

If the statement from the papers, as now before us, has the sanction of the captain of the Petrel and the foreign consuls, we can only deplore that foreign officers can lend their official positions to the spreading before the world, for unworthy objects, *untruths*, patent to every officer of this squadron.

WM. RODGERS TAYLOR, Captain U.S.S. Housatonic.

J. H. STRONG, Commander U.S.S. Flag.

JAMES MADISON FRAILEY, Commander U.S.S. Quaker City.

PEND. G. WATMOUGH, Commanding U.S.S. Memphis.

C. J. VAN ALSTINE, Commanding U.S.S. Stettin.

The reader may well wonder at the several preceding pages; the proclamation and the refutation at such length. The first-named shows that however able and brave the officers were who signed it, they did not limit their devotion to *fighting* for the Confederacy; they were willing to go far beyond that.

The refutation is inserted somewhat maliciously, to embarrass such persons as either believe what they choose, or assert a belief in what is absurd in itself. In the face of the character of the blockading force off the bar at that time, with three exceptions so entirely destructible by such vessels as the rams, it seems unaccountable that they did not remain outside of the bar during the day at least.

These Confederate rams never ventured out again, although Flag-Officer Ingraham states in his report that they were not struck by a projectile during the raid.

The construction of such vessels at Charleston must have been imperfect from a lack of plant of suitable materials, and of skilled workmen.¹ The wonder is, that under so many disadvantages, they should have ventured to construct any vessels. In every case the labor was without compensating result, if we except the structure on the hull of the frigate Merrimac, known as the Virginia to the Confederates, which, after the destruction of the sailing frigates Congress and Cumberland at Newport News, was soon after consigned to the flames as a result of the fall of Norfolk.

¹ Since writing the above, one of their former lieutenants, whose opinion and statements may be relied on, states: "They were well-constructed vessels, covered with four inches of iron, and would steam about seven knots. They drew twelve to thirteen feet, and were each armed with two Brooke rifled 80 pounders, and two 64-pounder shell-guns." He has no recollection as to where the enginery was made. From the experience in the capture of the Atlanta, it may be regarded certain that their casemates would not have resisted XV-inch shells.

Soon after this raid, the *New Ironsides*, then at anchor in Port Royal, a vessel built under far more favorable auspices than could obtain within the limits of the Confederacy, was added to the blockading force off Charleston. We may suppose, without derogation to the enemy, that she exercised a powerful restraining influence on the Confederate rams within that port.

The enemy, as we have seen, having felt the power of guns afloat where many of them could be brought to bear, no longer contested inferior points of defence, and fully aware of an intended attack on Charleston and under an apprehension of attack on Savannah, turned his attention to strengthening the defences of those cities by every means within his power. He looked with apprehension, as the people of the North looked with hope and expectation, upon the arrival of the monitor class of vessels that were completed and of others under construction, intended particularly for the attack on Charleston. In the early part of January several of them were already south of Cape Hatteras, where the *Monitor*, the original vessel of that type, foundered at sea, and at the same time the *Montauk* and the *Passaic* were in great peril.

Several of these vessels which arrived out in advance of others of their class intended for the attack on Charleston were sent by Rear-Admiral Dupont¹ to the Great Ogeechee River.

The Rear-Admiral informed the Department on the 28th of January that he considered it desirable in every way to test the ironclads of the *Monitor* type, and to avail himself of their usefulness until the intended number might arrive, he had sent the *Montauk*, Commander John L. Worden, to Os-

¹ The title of flag-officer had been changed by law to that of Rear-Admiral since the operations of the preceding year.

sabaw, to operate up the Great Ogeechee, and capture, if he could, the fort at Genesis Point (known afterward as Fort McAllister), under cover of which was lying the Nashville, a large side-wheel steamer, a blockade-runner fitted for a cruiser under the Confederate flag, and there for the purpose of escaping to foreign waters. If Commander Worden should be successful against the fort, it was thought that the Nashville might be destroyed, and afterward a railroad bridge lying two miles above the fort.

Commander Worden reported his arrival off Ossabaw Bar on the 24th of January, in tow of the James Adger. He crossed the bar at 5 P.M. but had to anchor on account of fog, which also held him fast the following day. The commanding officers of the Seneca, Wissahickon, Dawn, and Williams were called together and instructions given as to the plan of attack on the fort. On the 26th the Montauk anchored just out of range, followed by the other vessels. After dark, Lieutenant-Commander John L. Davis, with two armed boats, went up the river to reconnoitre, and to destroy range marks placed by the enemy. He examined the line of piles driven across the river diagonally below the fort, and found indications that the piles supported torpedoes. At 7 A.M. the Montauk moved to a position about one hundred and fifty yards below this line of piles, and opened fire, and at the same time the other vessels moved into effective range for shells and opened also. The fort at first returned the fire briskly, with fair aim, striking the Montauk thirteen times without inflicting serious damage. Before noon the shells of the Montauk were expended and the vessel withdrew and by signal directed the withdrawal of the other vessels. No casualties occurred on board of any of the attacking force. The fort was found to mount nine guns and was provided with ample bomb-proofs.

On February 1st the Montauk again took position, supposed to be within six hundred yards of McAllister, supported by the same vessels as before. The falling of the tide made it necessary to drop down to a distance of fourteen hundred yards, and the firing of shells and the return fire from the fort continued until near noon, when, Commander Worden says, "finding it useless to shell any longer, I withdrew out of range with the supporting gunboats."

The Montauk had been struck forty-six times without sustaining any serious damage, and although her fire had been delivered with accuracy, no further harm was done than to tear up the parapet and traverses of the fort.¹

On March 2d the Rear-Admiral had the satisfaction of reporting the destruction of the Nashville, which vessel had been successfully blockaded for eight months. He says: "Through the extreme vigilance and spirit of Lieutenant-Commander Davis of the Wissahickon, Lieutenant Barnes of the Dawn, and later, Lieutenant-Commander Gibson, I have been able to keep her so long confined to the waters of the Ogeechee.

"For some months the Nashville had been loaded with cotton, constantly watchful, yet never ventured an effort to escape. Then she withdrew up the river, and reappeared after a length of time fitted as a privateer. To defend her and the railroad bridge above, Fort McAllister was strengthened, and a diagonal row of piles driven, having a line of torpedoes below them. The vessel had appeared from time to time ready to make a dash should an opportunity offer. The vessel was armed with a heavy rifle mounted on a circle,

¹ One officer was killed, seven men wounded, and one gun disabled.

Colonel R. H. Anderson, commanding Fort McAllister, in his report of this action states: "The enemy fired steadily and with remarkable precision. At times their fire was terrible. Their mortar firing was unusually fine, a large number of shells bursting directly over the battery."

and was 'proverbially fast.' Through the ability and zeal of the officers before mentioned she had been held, and through the quick perception and rapid execution of Commander Worden she has been destroyed."

On the evening of February 27th Commander Worden observed the Nashville in movement above McAllister. In a reconnoissance it was discovered that she had grounded in a bend known as the seven-mile reach, and supposed to be within reach of the guns of the Montauk in her former position when attacking the fort. At daylight she went up with her consorts, into their former positions. The Nashville was seen aground at a distance of twelve hundred yards across the marsh, and a few shells thrown determined the range. In less than twenty minutes she was on fire forward, amidships, and aft. Soon after, the large pivot gun, mounted abaft the fore-mast, exploded from the heat. Twenty minutes later the smoke-stack went by the board, and soon after "the magazine exploding shattered the smoking ruins."

During this time McAllister was busily engaged firing at the Montauk, but in the attendant excitement only struck her five times, without damage to the vessel, and at the same time the firing from the fort on the gunboats was wild and without injury to them. The fire upon the fort destroyed one gun-carriage.¹

The destruction of the Nashville completed, the Montauk withdrew with her assisting force beyond the reach of guns; in doing so, she ran over a torpedo placed by the enemy, inflicting an injury so serious that, had she not been run aground soon after, she would have sunk. Once on the bottom, a piece of boiler iron was secured over the hole, and stanchioned temporarily, and then secured with tap-bolts,

¹ Confederate report.

which enabled her to perform such other service as was required during her continuance on the Southern coast.¹

The Rear-Admiral thought it desirable to further test the mechanical appliances of the monitors in an attack on McAllister before entering on more important operations, and as well to give the officers and men the advantage of target practice with their new ordnance; he therefore ordered such vessels as were available to a renewed attack.

They were the Passaic, Captain Percival Drayton; the Patapsco, Commander Daniel Ammen; and the Nahant, Commander John Downes, aided by three mortar schooners throwing XIII-inch shells.

Captain Drayton reported that on March 3d the bombardment had been maintained for eight hours by these vessels, the Passaic squarely in front of the fort, upon which seven guns were mounted, protected from an enfilading fire by high traverses. Owing to the slowness of the fire from the monitors, the men in the fort never exposed themselves, usually discharging their pieces while the vessels were loading, or just before the ports came into line. The row of piles and depth of water did not permit a nearer approach to the fort, which was found by spirit-level and necessary elevations to be twelve hundred yards, and seven-second fuzes were found necessary. Two of the guns of the fort were disabled during the engagement; immense craters were dug into the parapet and traverses, but still no injury was done that could not be readily repaired during the night. The three mortar schooners, at a distance of four thousand yards, kept up an ineffective firing during the attack, and until the

¹ The officer commanding on this occasion, now Rear-Admiral Worden, regards the destruction of the Nashville, under the attendant difficulties, with more professional pride than the engagement between the Monitor and the Merrimac, which gave him a world-wide reputation.

next morning, the shells generally falling short. The guns on board the *Passaic* worked satisfactorily, "except that the box round the XV-inch gun, on examination, was found to be almost detached from the side, owing to the breaking of the bolts which secured it to the turret."¹ A close observation showed that a few more rounds would have broken it. The decks of the *Passaic* were badly injured, being considerably grooved; a mortar-shell filled with sand fell on the deck, and had it not struck over a beam, it would inevitably have gone through. As it was, it completely crushed the planking at the side of the beam, opening quite a hole. The measurement of a fragment of the shell showed it to be but ten inches. The fort directed nearly all its fire at the *Passaic*. During the action she was struck thirty-four times; nine of the hits were on the side armor; thirteen on the deck, breaking bolts and causing a leak; five on the turret; two on the pilot-house; one on the roof of the turret, and one on the smoke-stack. The indentations were from one-half to two inches; many bolts were broken. Neither of the other ironclads engaged were struck except with Whitworth bolts of small size, and no injury was sustained.

The report of the *Passaic* does not give the number of shells expended, but the Confederate reports give ninety. Her battery, and that of the *Montauk* and the *Nahant*, was a XV-inch and a XI-inch smooth-bore; and of the *Patapsco*, one XV-inch smooth-bore, and one 150-pounder rifle. Forty-six shells were fired from this rifle, and fourteen shells from the smooth-bore of the vessel last named, the gun machinery working satisfactorily.

¹ The XV-inch guns first put on board of the monitors were too short to fairly clear the port; to avoid the counter-blast of powder in the turret, a "box" was fastened with screws to it; a better substitute was found in a cylindrical casting somewhat larger than the bore, which was fastened by bolts around the muzzle of the gun.

On board of the Nahant, the compressor of the XV-inch gun became disarranged at various times, and at the twentieth discharge, the rivets securing the brass guides on the after-part of the carriage gave way, the guides falling down into the turret-chamber, without, however, disabling the gun. A cast-iron "yoke" put in to allow the use of an XI-inch gun temporarily on a carriage made for a XV-inch gun was broken at the thirty-ninth discharge, thus disabling the gun until a new "yoke" could be put in. The foundries were not able to furnish a sufficient number of XV-inch guns when the vessels were completed, hence the temporary use of a smaller calibre, and the fitment of a "yoke" to hold the trunnions of a smaller gun. It should have been made of bronze, cast-iron not having the tenacity to resist the strain brought upon it. The rifle of the Patapsco had, months before, carried away its "yoke" in like manner, and the Ordnance Bureau, being thus informed, had bronze "yokes" sent down, which were substituted, and cured that defect.

After the bombardment the vessels withdrew, as did the mortar schooners and the gunboats Seneca, Wissahickon, and Dawn, that had laid two miles from the fort to signal the effect of the shells.

On the 6th, early in the day, the Passaic, Patapsco, and Nahant left Ossabaw Sound in tow of suitable vessels, and the same evening entered Port Royal Harbor.

The Passaic was at once put under repairs, which were not fully effected until the 28th. She also had a bronze "yoke" put in to avoid a future mishap, such as the Patapsco and Nahant had undergone. The last-named, and indeed all of the monitor class, had bronze "yokes" placed in the carriages upon which the XI-inch guns were mounted. All of them, too, had one-inch plates of iron placed over the

magazines, and the vessels that had not powerful centrifugal pumps already were so fitted.

On the 25th the Weehawken, Nahant, Patapsco, and Catskill left Port Royal under tow for North Edisto Inlet—an excellent harbor within twenty miles of Charleston Bar. The repairs and fitments of the Passaic, Montauk, and Keokuk detained them until the 1st of April, when they also proceeded to North Edisto, where they had been preceded by the Nantucket—another monitor which had arrived from the North on the 13th of March. The vessels were amply supplied with ammunition, and were fully prepared, as far as they could be, to make the intended attack on Fort Sumter.

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 Union Batteries.  Rebel Batteries.

